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ABSTRACT

Although children's programs have been on campuses since the turn of the century, their focus has changed in the last two decades, moving along a developmental continuum. Using Katz's constructs of developmental stages of preschool teachers, the field of campus children's centers is described as progressing through a survival, consolidation, renewal, and maturity stage of development. Each stage and its attending needs and recommendations is discussed within a national context to focus attention on the importance of the ecological nature of that development. (Author/BB)

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Campus Children's Centers: Two Decades of Ferment

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RUNNING HEAD: Campus Children's Centers: Two
Decades of Ferment

Born in the seventies, the field of campus children's centers is moving along a developmental continuum. Katz's constructs of the developmental stages of teachers serves as a route to map the path of that movement. Each stage and its attending needs and recommendations is briefly discussed. The periods are located in a national context in order to bring attention to the importance of the ecological nature of that development.

For the past fifteen years I have been studying campus children's centers from a variety of vantage points, serving the roles of teacher/director developing a new flexible-schedule campus child care center, doctoral student studying campus child care, chairperson of a department of early childhood with supervisory responsibility for three types of children's centers, finally the head of a national organization.

During my most recent post as chairperson of the National Coalition for Campus Child Care Inc. informational requests flowed from all over the country. In the beginning of the decade the queries were primarily from persons starting centers, experimenting with flexible schedule, or trying to survive on campus. During the last five years requests have increased and the pool of persons seeking information has expanded from campus child care directors to include college faculty, staff, and administrators. Many of those appointed to committees to investigate possibilities for campus child care have no credentials for the job. Not knowing how to proceed, they send me copies of the "charges" to their committee, wonder what questions to ask and inquire about the activity in other parts of the country. In the space of a few weeks, representatives of six colleges, spotted across the country, sought answers to the same questions about a new area of activity, campus child care for faculty and staff. On a separate front the parent group has been activated by a report in Working Mothers listing NCCCC as a resource for child care on campus.

Over one hundred letters arrived from parents wanting to further their education , asking for the names of colleges in their area that had child care centers.

To put this picture in historic perspective, although children's programs have been on campuses since the turn of the century, their focus has completely changed in the last two decades. The increasing number of non-traditional students, women's issues and student activism that was born in the sixties gave birth to a redirection of the campus child care movement. This redirection of campus center efforts , occurring during a period of national recession, was often undertaken with what one might call a recession perspective. Centers began on a shoestring, with alternative kinds of fundings rather than line items. These efforts , grass roots local responses to the need for children's centers on campus, were occurring on large and small, two -and four- year, urban and rural, public and private campuses. Originators were virtually reinventing the wheel on each campus. At the same time state wide and national efforts paralleled local efforts, with only occasional and accidental intersection.

The constructs of Katz's developmental stages of preschool teachers (Katz, 1972), while created to describe patterns of professional development of early childhood teachers are useful to map the progress of campus children's centers through two tumultuous decades . As we begin to look at the developmental taxonomy it's important to recognize that the field as it moves

through the stages is pressured by forces in other systems.

The field of campus children's centers is located in a series of systems, which can be represented by a series of concentric circles. The inner circle is the microsystem, composed of individual families. The next layer is the mesosystem, where the campus children's centers reside within university or college systems. Superimposed on the mesosystem is the exosystem, within which local agencies, mass media and work are located. The outermost layer is the macrosystem, the site of social, political, economic and educational systems. Forces in each of these systems affect the field, and the field in turn influences the systems. For example, changes in the demographics of families, and college students, within the microsystem, were the impetus for the development of the campus children's centers and the growth of the field. Growth was accelerated by increasing media attention to issues affecting families and children, a force from the exosystem, and by government policies in the macrosystem. Further, each campus center is linked to a college or university system, which in itself is composed of many communities, each affecting the other. The complex nature of the communities is discussed in the next article by Schwartz.

Thus, as we focus on charting the growth of campus children's centers, it is important to keep in mind that 1) not only does the rate of progress through the stages vary for individual centers, but it does for the field as a whole; and 2) like individual development the path is not linear but complex,

set in the context of economic , social, and political realities. Whether a center flourishes or the field does, depends not only on its own resources but how it manages the buffeting of the forces in the other systems residing in its ecological niche. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

The primary focus of this paper is the description of the progress of the field with some brief attention to the context of the period. Katz describes teachers as moving through the stages of survival, consolidation ,renewal and maturity. In each stage she posits " developmental tasks" and "training needs".

Survival

For teachers in the survival stage , the main concern is getting through the day or week and resolving the sizable gap between image and reality. To make it successfully through this stage, teachers need an on going combination of support and reassurance, coupled with site specific instruction in skills and understanding the complexity of behavior.

The survival period for the field of campus children's centers was characterized by grass roots activity. The first major reference to the changing form of campus children's centers was a national survey that described the newly developing centers(Greenblatt, 1973). During this stage , questions of existence were bedded in related issues of funding, sponsorship and staffing. Campus centers , isolated from the rest of the community , struggled for an identity and a home . Directors reported problems with sponsors and demands from consumers.

Typical problems included:

- 1- threatened closing of centers
- 2- closing of one center, opening of another
- 3- dropped by one department and taken by another
- 4- overlooked altogether
- 5- competition between programs on campus
- 6- rifts over funding
- 7- ranked as a service
- 8- inadequate facilities. (Keyes, 1980)

Just as teachers in Katz's construct need consultation and guidance during this initial survival period so did the centers but due their isolation in the campus community there was rarely any available. A national coalition started informally in the activist seventies, took on this function of providing support and stimulation to persons struggling on their campus around these issues. Their first few annual conferences emphasized procedures for survival, starting centers, funding, staffing, curriculum and evaluation. A woman at one of the early conferences said, "I'm so glad to meet another person who is a campus child care person. I've never been able to find one before". Finding out you were not alone, having the opportunity to compare ideas or vent about the way things were, characterized the activity.

For the field of campus children's centers, the survival period seems to have taken the greatest amount of time, lasting from the early seventies to the mid eighties. One of the forces

buffeting the campuses from other systems was the national recession which forced college and university campuses into a fiscal squeeze of tight resources and competition for funds. That, coupled with the lack of sophistication and isolation of the new players, may have prolonged this period. Nevertheless it represents the beginning of the emerging forms of campus centers, the seeding of a national group to act as a support, and the beginning search for resources in the literature.

Consolidation

During this next stage, according to Katz, the teachers consolidate the gains made during the first stage. Having gained a baseline of information about children, they begin to differentiate specific skills and problems to resolve.

To progress through this stage effectively, teachers need on site consultation from trainers with whom they can mutually explore solutions based on first hand knowledge from their sites.

At the consolidation stage, campus children's centers, via their staff, began to have an understanding of the intricacies within the center that affected its functioning. Although they had not, as Bickimer notes in his article in this issue, accomplished the task of understanding the institution within which they resided, they began to identify particular campus needs related to their centers and differentiate the nature of their problems and the kinds of challenges they faced. A modification of designs resulted from this identification of needs.

Some campuses children's centers took a comprehensive approach, starting with one component perhaps a center base program, and adding as needed such components as home based, resource and referral, school age. A few focused on student access and work/ family concerns through voucher programs, tuition assistance and emergency care programs. Several with either limited budgets or populations to serve worked to develop consortiums or partnerships, often with institutions off campus. Some, successful in finding funding, developed center based programs with family day care home support and training components, and more recently, broadly conceptualized family centers.

It was difficult for many centers to acquire on site consultation as recommended for this period. To fill this void The National Coalition for Campus Child Care Inc., whose development is described by Jenkins in this issue, picked as conference topics site specific issues, and rotated the location of its annual meetings in order to provide support to centers.

During this time the need for greater access was met through the development of some state coalitions. These often began at National Coalition conferences, where persons from different campuses in the state met for the first time. At the present there are about seven state groups, one of which Alger describes in this issue.

A natural by product of coalitions is high visibility for questions needing answers. Individual members, aware of the

groups seeking answers, began to produce literature that took the form of manuals, bibliographies, descriptive surveys. (Keyes, 1980; Podell, 1982; Corder, 1986; McElhenny, 1987; Sparks, 1987; Keyes and Cook, 1988)

During this period, which lasted about five years, some of the forces that buffeted the campuses included a further decline in the traditional student body, an increase in non traditional students, many of whom care for young children, further changes in family demographics, continuing issues of women's rights and affirmative action, increased media attention to issues of children and families. These forces seem to have brought increased visibility to the field of campus children's centers and accelerated the consolidation period.

However the future of individual programs, reminiscent of the survival period was precarious, with unstable funding in some places and unrealistic demands for self sufficiency in others.

Renewal

During the renewal period, according to Katz, teachers become interested in new material, techniques, ideas and approaches that are developing in the field at large.

The staff development needs include opportunities to meet colleagues from different programs, to visit other sites and explore the literature.

In the campus children's center movement nationally the Coalition filled this void as reflected in the increase in

membership, conference attendees, and publications. Conference topics that exemplified the expansion of the field included alternative designs for campus children's centers, working with architects, leadership and effective management, institutional priorities, state efforts, and networking.

The literature in the field has grown from fifteen citations listed in the first Coalition bibliography to one hundred fifty in the current list. The literature is still primarily descriptive. For example, the college and university systems, only recently interested in the campus children's centers within their domains, investigated amount of service, quality, and design of the centers (Alger, 1988; Summa, 1988; NCCC, 1990). There is but one study at this time that documents the relationship between campus child care and success on a community college. (Fadale, 1988)

This latest period has been accelerated by forces in the national system, rapid changing demographics, the entry of new stakeholders and the return of others. New national issues such as those surrounding the working and studying parents, have filtered down to campuses, as Simon reports in this journal. Student activity prevalent in the sixties is reemerging on some campuses. The unions, historic advocates and supporters of child care, have become active in the field of campus children's centers. For example, the clerical workers union at Harvard and the administration agreed on some work/family features in their contract this year. Allied national organizations have surfaced

as interested parties. Three such examples are the newly formed Consortium for Single Parent Scholarships , The American Association of University Professors and The National Association of University Attorneys and Counsels. The American Association of University Professors has endorsed child care for faculty members and charged universities with assuming a portion of the responsibility for its provision . The National Association of University Attorneys and Counsels focused on campus child care risk management and insurance at their annual conference.

Representative of a new approach associated with this renewal stage is the comprehensive child care system design recently funded by Minnesota . The 2.2 million dollar investment will, according to its director " model how one institution can respond to and effectively solve a major social problem." .(The Minnesota Daily, Friday, May 25, 1990, Volume 91, Number 147, page 1,10). Several other exemplars representing new possibilities for campus children's centers are described in this issue by Benham and Bernani, and Griffin, Solit and Bodner-Johnson.

Maturity

Maturity is a time when teachers begin to ask deeper and more abstract questions. They search for a perspective, as they seek a larger view of what they are doing. It is a time for working on issues, talking to others, challenging their own field, within and without .

In the best judgement of the editors ,the movement is on

the crest of this period . It remains to be answered whether the field moves resolutely ahead or is pulled back by a variety of forces. The articles in this issue are dedicated to carry the movement forward and our final article looks to the nature of the tasks that go with this new period.

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